

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace paragraph [0052] of the application with the following corrected paragraph:

**[0052]** In addition to light beam focusing, GRIN devices according to embodiments of the present invention can also be used in other applications. For instance, in many near field optics applications, transformation of ~~align~~ a light beam from a mode profile corresponding to a standard single mode optical fiber to a smaller mode size is generally achieved by tapering the fiber to a small tip (e.g., tens of nanometers) at one end and coating the outside of the tapered region with a metal film to prevent light from escaping. In general, most of the light (as much as 99.99%) is lost during this beam size transformation process. Replacing such tapered fibers with GRIN devices according to embodiments of the present invention can improve the transmission efficiency substantially.